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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. Purpose of and Need for Action

1. Project Title: Western Montana Fish & Game Association (WMFGA) Shooting Range Enhancement Project.

2. Type of Proposed Action: Range Improvements: (1) Repair safety berms, increase berm heights and improve roads; (2) replace the existing north boundary fence with a 6ft chainlink fence; (3) construct a 960 square foot building which will contain bathroom facilities and a meeting room at the west end of the range.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

WMFGA owns and operates the Deer Creek Shooting Center (DCSC), located in the Hellgate Canyon between East Missoula and Bonner (Map 3) on the N ½ of section 19 and the NW ¼ of section 20, T13, N, R18W, P.M.M. The property, approximately 80 acres, sits on the south side of the railroad track between the Clarkfork River and Deer Creek Road (Maps 1-4). The site rests along the north slope of Mount Sentinel, a 2,000 ft high mountain that serves as the primary impact area for the entire facility. The west end of the DCSC borders the City of Missoula's Kim Williams riverside recreational trail that parallels the Clark Fork river and dead ends into the Montana Rail Link railroad tracks and DCSC property (See Map 4 C&D).

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) MCA87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices)

5. Need for the Action(s):

The side berms of the 100, 200, and 300 meter shooting bays are in need of repair as soil has slumped and settled in places and fill is required to increase berm height. Repair of these areas will help reduce the chance of rounds escaping the shooting bays. The existing roads need to be graded, regraded, and rolled to improve safety and accessibility.

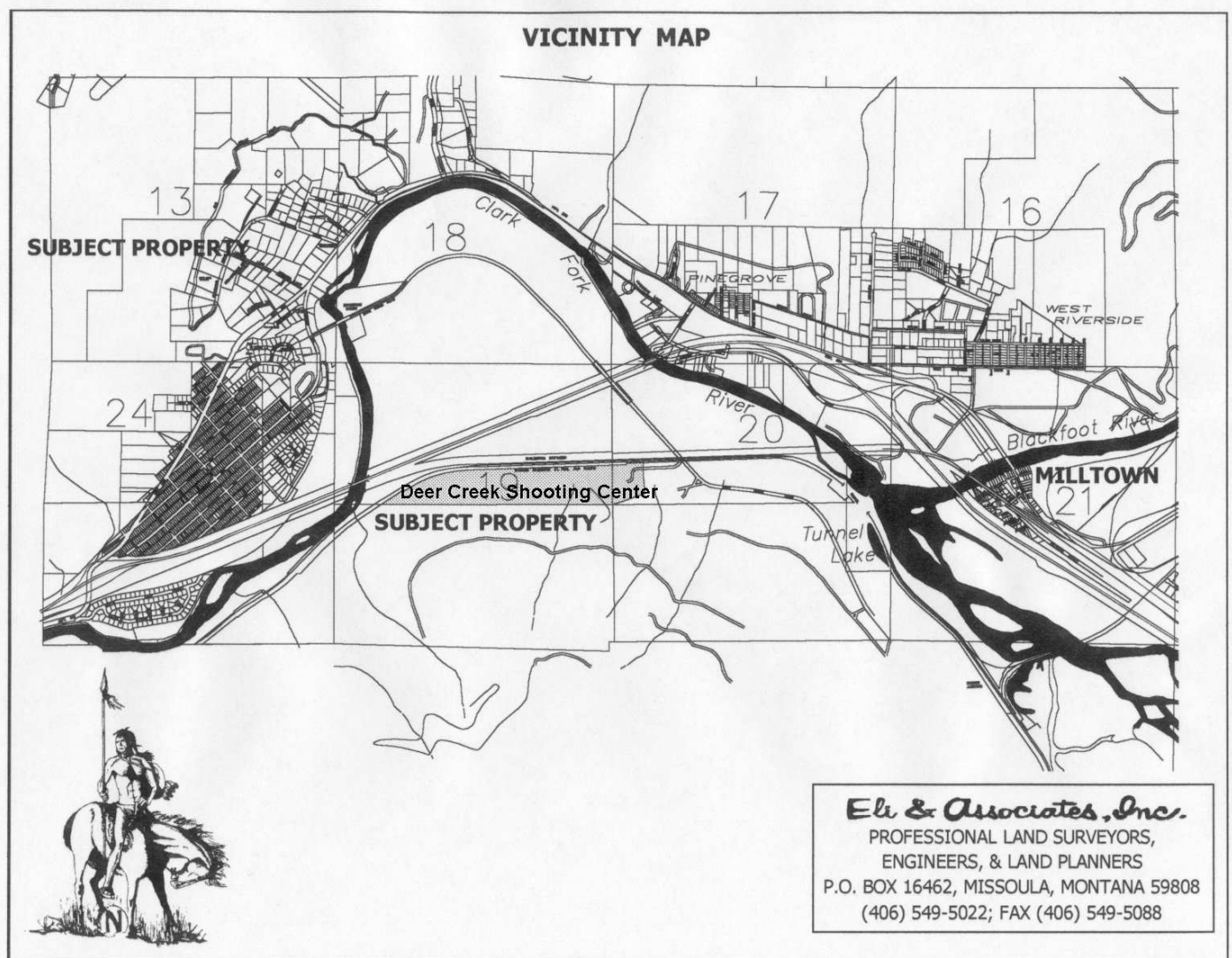
Construction of a six-foot tall chain link fence along the northern boundary of the property will provide security for the range and for the public. Currently recreational traffic using the Kim Williams riverside trail either turn around at the east end of this trail or continue onto Montana Rail Link and/or DCSC property to reach Deer Creek road (Map 4). This route is a popular biking trail promoted by *Mountain Bike Missoula* and is part of the *Marshall Canyon -Woods Gulch Loop*. WMFGA has put up signs for years all along this boundary warning travelers that the property belongs to WMFGA, that the property is used for a shooting range, and that trespassing is strictly forbidden. The WMFGA has always maintained a barbed wire field fence to demark the property line and to discourage trespass; however, this field fence has proven insufficient and is often cut or people simply climb over or through the fence. Some of the trespassers in the past have been youth who can pose a serious safety concern because of a lack of understand about shooting and shooting ranges. Trespassers are typically not familiar with the DCSC Range Rules and the areas of the DCSC that are not safe for travel. Also the addition of a new development to east of the range may increase the amount of human traffic using this route (see Map 4).

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Construction of bathrooms at the west end of the property will accommodate shooters using this area of the range, and who currently have to travel approximately 1200 yards to access existing bathroom facilities. Also the addition of an indoor classroom will provide more opportunities for educational events (see Map 5).

6. Objectives for the Action(s): All projects expand range use and accessibility, improve available facilities, and/ or improve safety, security and human health.

7. Area Maps

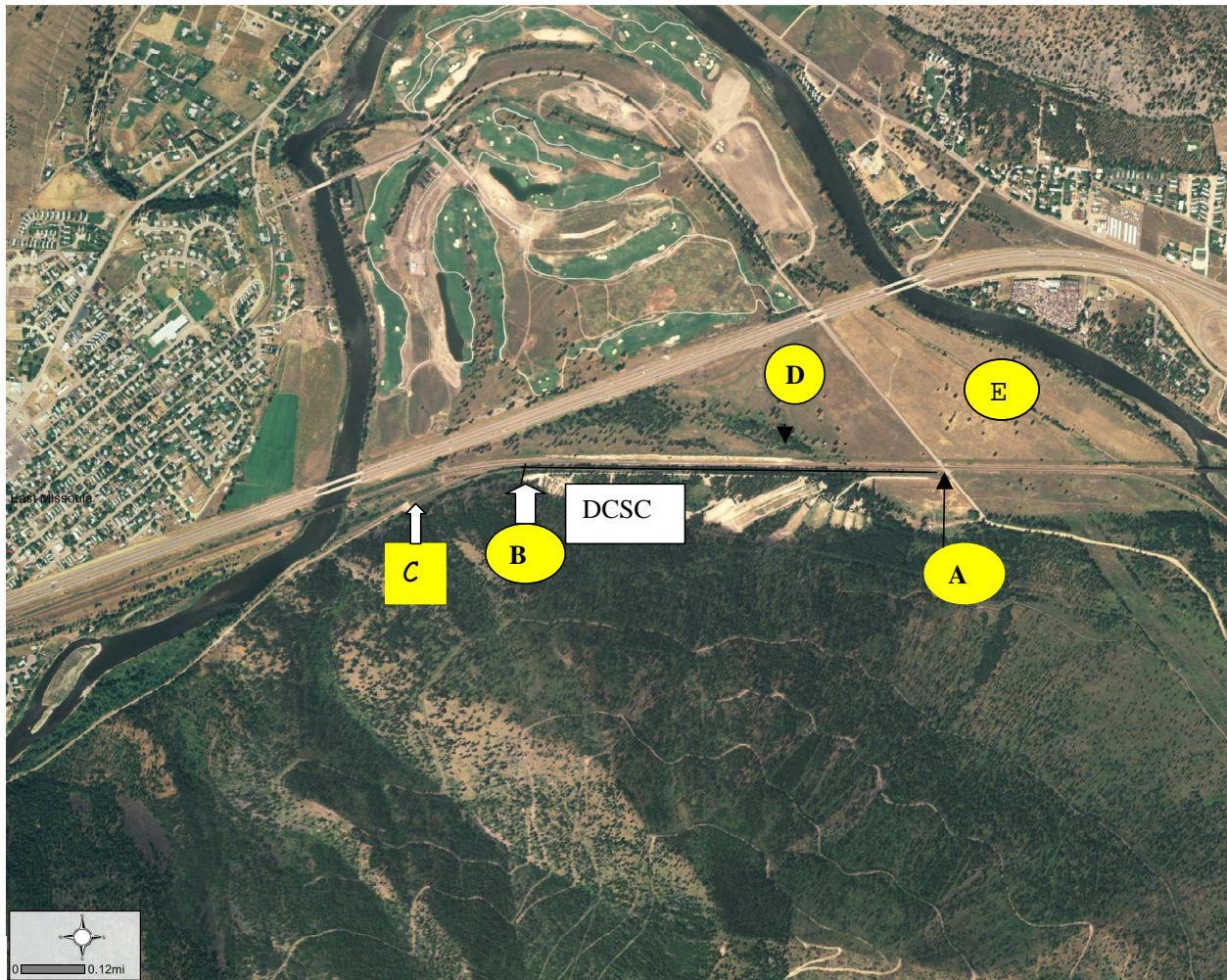


Map 1





Map 3, Aerial Photo of the Deer Creek Shooting Complex identified by the DCSC lettering on the photo.



Map 4.

- A. Indicates the east most end of the proposed 6ft security fence;
- B. Indicates the west most end of the proposed security fence and the black line is where the proposed 6' security fence will run approximately 4,500 feet along the north boundary of the DCSC property from the entrance of the range, at Deer Creek road westward to the archery shooting bay;
- C. The point where the Kim Williams riverside recreational trail dead ends into the DCSR & MT Rail Link property;
- D. The arrow points to the MT Rail Link property that parallels the northern boundary of DCSC;
- E. Proposed development.



Map 5. Site of new building.

8. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

All work will occur within the boundaries of the DCSC.

9. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The project is on an existing shooting range in a forested area of predominantly new growth Ponderosa Pine. There are no year round flowing streams, irrigation ditches or ponds on the site. No delineated wetlands; however, there exists a low depression on the property that due to seasonal run-off sometimes collects water in the spring but dries up in the summer months. A 2003 *MCS Environmental Inc.* investigation determined that the site did not meet criteria that would qualify the area as a Jurisdictional wetland regulated by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

10. Description of Project:

Project 1 - Repair safety berms, increase berm heights and dress roads. This project proposes to repair safety berms that have settled, increase the height of critical shooting bay side berms, and grade, regravels, and roll all internal roads and driveways at the DCSC. The primary focus of the berm reconstruction will be the safety berms between bays 100-B and 300-A, 300-A and 300-B, and between 300-B and 100-C (both sides of both 300-yard ranges). The project will fill slumped areas in existing berms, and raise all berms 2 feet in height. This will require approximately 1,000 linear yards of berm work, and a calculated 6,916 cubic yards of fill material to rebuild these berms. Some fill material will come from the impact areas of these shooting bays, and some fine material will be cut from the floors of the bays to avoid distance hauling and to provide fine material to dress berm surfaces. Some of the material cut from the bays floor will be replaced with broken rock from the bay impact areas.

Project 2 - Replace North Boundary fence (Map 4). Remove the existing barbed wire field fence and construct a six foot tall chain link fence. This fence will extend from the DCSC's entrance gate at the east end of the property to the end of the archery bay and will dogleg to the south (see map 4 A&B). The entire length of the fence is approximately 4500 feet. The WMFGA will remove and dispose of the old fence, and clear the fence line using volunteer labor.

Project 3- Install Bathrooms and Construct Meeting Room (see Map 5).

WMFGA plans to construct a single building with both men and women's handicap accessible bathrooms and a utility room. In addition, the building will enclose a 24-foot square multipurpose room that will serve as a meeting room, classroom and event organization center. There site already includes a leveled and compacted pad of crushed rock; a well with pump, controls, and water lines; and a septic tank has been installed. A road and electricity has also been installed.

In Accordance with contracts agreements with Fish, Wildlife & Parks, all projects are to be completed by June 30, 2009.

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11. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

None

(a) Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
MT Dept of Environmental Quality		Septic
MT Dept of Labor	Electrical	

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$103,457

(Does not include a 50/50 match from the Western Montana Fish & Game Association (WMFGA)).

12. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups: FWP-

Hunter Education Program, Missoula Police Department, the Hunter Education Program, the ROTC of the U of M

13. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement: The

Western Montana Fish and Game Association (WMFGA) has a meeting of its Board of Directors on the first Thursday of each month in the conference room of the Region 2 FWP headquarters and an Annual Meeting on the first Thursday in January of each year. All of these meetings are open to the public. Our 1,500 members are specifically invited. It is not unusual for us to have non-member visitors to these meetings. The proposed security fence project was discussed at the Annual Meeting in 2008 and probably at every Board of Directors meeting for the past two years.

The project has been announced in newsletters to the WMFGA membership on more than one occasion. Although we have not sought community publicity for this proposed project (e.g., on television or in the newspapers), the Board of Directors has been very open about our intentions.

In addition, the Board of Directors have solicited participation from about a dozen or more local contractors.

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14. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Missoula City Parks

15. Names, Address and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Mr. Jim McDonald, WMFGA

PO Box 4227

Missoula, MT 59806

406-370-2500

16. Other Pertinent Information:

Shooting range applications require the participant's governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: April 24, 2008.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmental sensitive areas)

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats			X	X		X
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		X
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		X
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		X

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

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2. There are no live streams, irrigation ditches, or ponds on the site. There exists a low area on the property that due to seasonal run-off sometimes collects water in the spring but dries up in the summer months. In 2003 MCS Environmental Inc. investigated the area and determined that the site did not meet criteria that that would qualify the area as a Jurisdictional wetland regulated by the US Army Corps of Engineers.

The six-foot chain link security fence may change the movement of local wildlife which could cause train and wildlife conflicts; however the east, west, and southern boundaries of the property will not be fenced with 6' chain-link and should allow for continued wildlife movement.

11. WMFGA has conducted extensive sound testing to determine noise levels and found them to be of satisfactory levels.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		X
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		X
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

Comments (A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

5. Range site plans; construction and the ongoing operational and maintenance plans meet the standards of safety for range participants and the public at large. The 6 ' security fence project is designed to safely separate the public that uses the Kim Williams hiking trail from trespassing into an active firing range. The fence will be posted and safety plans and user guidelines are in evidence throughout the range complex.

7. Range will provide year round access and handicapped accessibility. Cooperating organizations are aware of the improved range options and WMFGA has a history of cooperation with hunter education classes, Missoula city police department, U of M ROTC and other shooting groups.

Part III. Environmental Consequences

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? NO

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? This proposed action has no impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Identification of the Preferred Alternatives:

The proposed alternative A, alternative B and the no action alternative were considered.

- **Alternative A (Proposed Alternative)** is as described in paragraph (#10 Description of Project). An overall range safety improvement project that involves construction of a security fence, impact berms repair, addition of a classroom building and handicap assessable bathrooms.
- **Alternative B (No Action Alternative)** Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without proposed expansion and improvements.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative

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environmental or potentially negative consequences. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the proposed alternative for range improvements such as increased human safety, increased handicap accessibility, and overall increased recreational opportunities. The no action alternative would be to not fund the improvements and the range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same. Therefore the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Two alternatives have been considered, **A** (Proposed Alternative) and **B** (No Action Alternative). There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent.

Neither the proposed alternative (**A**) nor the no action alternative (**B**) would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

- There are beneficial consequences to Acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative (A)** enhance human safety, enhanced opportunities for educational classes, and handicap accessibility.
- The **No Action Alternative (B)** would be not to improve the range and enhance human safety, enhance educational opportunities, and handicap accessibility but continue with present activities and facilities. Land use would remain the same. Present activities include rifle, pistol, shotgun, and archery without the proposed improvements to the operations. Therefore the proposed alternative is the prudent alternative.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

NONE

List and explain proposed mitigative measures (stipulations): NONE

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

Western MT Fish & game Assoc.

MT Fish Wildlife and Park

Missoula City Parks and Recreation Department

Gene Hickman, Ecological Assessments, Helena

PART IV NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range/alterd areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative. The long relationship that Western Montana Fish & Game Association (WMFGA) has with hunter education, youth groups, local law enforcement all indicate support of the proposed alternative. Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the proposed alternative for the improvements of the range complex of the WMFGA.

EA prepared by: Kurt Cunningham
FWP PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620

Date Completed: August 5, 2008

PART IV. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

None required.

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the **Missoulian** newspaper, announcing the 30-day public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.